

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 CAIRO 01761 01 OF 02 101413Z

42

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
----- 004850

R 101300Z FEB 76
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9959
INFO AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 CAIRO 1761

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, EG, US, SY
SUBJECT: GOE CONCERN ABOUT AMERICAN OFFICIAL AND PRESS PROMINENCE
BEING GIVEN TO ASAD AND SYRIA

SUMMARY. SENIOR GOE OFFICIALS ARE QUIETLY COMPLAINING TO US ABOUT WHAT THEY SEE AS SHIFTING USG AND US MEDIA EMPHASIS FROM SADAT TO ASAD AS THE PRINCIPAL ARAB LEADER. THEY POINT TO US PRAISE FOR SARG IN LEBANON, NEW MEDIA FOCUS ON ASAD AS ME "SUPER STAR", AND LACK OF USG RESPONSE TO SYRIAN MEDIA ATTACKS ON "DECEITFUL" USG POLICY. EGYPTIANS, PERENNIALY HYPERSENSITIVE TO ANY CHALLENGE TO EGYPT'S PREMIER ROLE IN ARAB WORLD, ARE PARTICULARLY PRICKLY NOW, HAVING CONCLUDED SARG INTERESTED NOT IN PEACE, BUT IN MILKING POLITICAL AND PROPAGANDA GAIN FROM STALEMATE IT HAS IMPOSED. FOR SADAT, USG-GOE RELATIONSHIP IS CRUCIAL, BOTH AS ASSET IN INTER-ARAB RIVALRIES AND AS VITAL UNDERPINNING OF HIS FOREIGN POLICY. FEAR IS THIS RELATIONSHIP BEGINNING TO BE SUBTLY UNDERMINED. SOME PUBLIC AND PRIVATE GESTURES ON OUR PART SEEM INDICATED TO SOOTHE EGYPTIAN FEARS, SUSPICIONS, AND OUTRAGED PRIDE. END SUMMARY.

1. WE ARE BEGINNING TO GET RUMBLINGS FROM SENIOR GOE CIRCLES IN MFA (FAHMY AND HIS STAFF) AND PRESIDENCY (TAHSIN BASHIR, HAMDI TAHRI) ABOUT WHAT IS BEING READ HERE AS BOTH A USG OFFICIAL AND PUBLIC MEDIA SHIFT FROM SADAT

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 CAIRO 01761 01 OF 02 101413Z

TO ASAD AS PRINCIPAL ARAB LEADER. WITH SOME RESENTMENT, OUR

INTERLOCUTORS POINT TO TWO ASPECTS OF CURRENT SITUATION, WHICH THEY INTERPRET AS SUPPORTING THEIR CASE.

A. FIRST, SINCE SYRIAN-SPONSORED UNSC DEBATE, AMERICA PRESS HAS BEGUN TO FOCUS ON ASAD IN ITS NEWS COVERAGE. AS RECENT TIME ARTICLE PUT IT, SYRIA HAS BECOME MIDDLE EAST QUOTE SUPER STAR UNQUOTE. AS IF THIS WERE NOT ENOUGH, USG OFFICIALS HAVE PUBLICLY APPLAUDED SYRIAN ROLE IN LEBANESE PEACEMAKING PROCESS. EGYPTIANS, ON THEIR PART, HAVE HAD TO SIT ON SIDELINES AND DEEPLY RESENT SYRIAN SUCCESS IN LEBANON. WHILE PROFESSING TO WANT A SETTLEMENT IN LEBANON, THEY DENIGRATE SYRIAN ACHIEVEMENT AT EVERY OPPORTUNITY. IN SHORT, THEY VIEW APPARENT SYRIAN SUCCESS AS A BLOW TO EGYPTIAN POLITICAL INFLUENCE IN ARAB WORLD AND PRIVATELY GRUMBLE THAT SINAI II IS RESPONSIBLE FOR SITUATION IN WHICH GOE NOW FINDS ITSELF.

B. SECOND, EGYPTIANS NOTE USG HAS CHOSEN TO IGNORE RECENT SPATE OF SYRIAN PUBLIC MEDIA ATTACKS ON GOE AND USG. FOR EXAMPLE, DAMSCUS RADIO CHARGED FEW DAYS AGO THAT USG, GOE, AND ISRAEL ARE IN LEAGUE TO DECEIVE ARABS AND TO MAINTAIN ISRAEL AS BASE FOR US IMPERIALISM IN MIDDLE EAST (SEE FBIS REPORTS)

ANOTHER RECENT DAMASCUS RADIO BROADCAST ALLEGED EGYPTIAN REGIME KNEW SINAI II WOULD PROVIDE ISRAEL WITH TIME TO BIND ITS WOUNDS SO THAT USG COULD RETURN TO ITS QUOTE POLICY OF DECEPTION UNQUOTE BASED ON DESIRE DRIVE WEDGE INTO ARAB UNITY. DAMASCUS HAS BROADCAST THAT USG CONSIDERS ISRAELI QUOTE EXPANSION UNQUOTE AS METHOD TO CONSOLIDATE US INFLUENCE IN MIDDLE EAST. THERE HAVE BEEN OTHER SUCH RECENT ATTACKS HEARD BY EGYPTIANS. OUR INTERLOCUTORS PROFESS TO FIND IT DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND WHY USG DOES NOT PUBLICLY RESPOND TO SUCH SCURRIOUS CHARGES AND NOTE THAT IN ARAB WORLD SILENCE MEANS ASSENT.

2. SENIOR EGYPTIANS MAKE NO BONES ABOUT THEIR MISGIVINGS RE OUR CURRENT BENIGN POSTURE TOWARD ASAD AND THE SYRIANS. WHILE THEY EARLIER WANTED SYRIA TO PARTICIPATE IN ME PEACE PROCESS, AND STILL DO IF SHE WISHES TO DO SO, THEY HAVE NOW CONCLUDED SARG HAS NO INTEREST IN FURTHERING PEACE PROCESS.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 CAIRO 01761 01 OF 02 101413Z

INSTEAD, SARG OBJECTIVE IS TO MAKE POLITICAL CAPITAL OUT OF STALEMATE IT HAS IMPOSED. SADAT HAS TOLD VISITORS IT IS NOW AN "EITHER OR" CONFLICT BETWEEN HIM AND ASAD. FAHMY HAS BEGUN TALKING ABOUT GOING TO GENEVA ALONE IF NEED BE. IN THIS HEATED ATMOSPHERE BROUGHT ABOUT LARGELY BY SYRIAN REACTION TO SINAI II, EGYPTIANS ARE CONCERNED THAT IN ARAB WORLD EYES USG APPEARS TO BE COZING UP TO DAMASCUS TO PROBABLY DETRIMENT OF CAIRO'S POSITION AS THE CHIEF ARAB

WORLD-WASHINGTON LINK ON ISRAELI PROBLEM. AS EGYPTIAN INFLUENCE IN ARAB WORLD IS SEEN TO DIMINISH (E.G. LEBANON), SADAT'S FOSTERING OF SPECIAL GOE-USG RELATIONSHIP IS ONE OF LAST TANGIBLE ASSETS HE POSSESSES SINCE, IN HIS VIEW, MOST ARABS AGREE THAT HIS BRINGING USG ACTIVELY INTO THE POLITICAL SCENE WAS AND IS DIPLOMATIC COUP. IF SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP SHOULD WANE BECAUSE OF ANY US ACTION (OR LACK THEREOF), SADAT WILL BE CAST BY SYRIAN, IRAQI AND OTHER ARAB CRITICS AS GULLIBLE SIMPLETON AT BEST OR, AT WORST, AS THE DECEITFUL US AGENT SYRIANS NOW SAY THAT HE IS (SEE REF FBIS).

3. EGYPTIANS KNOW WE HAVE REPEATEDLY STATED IN PAST TWO YEARS THAT USG REGARDS SADAT AS PRINCIPAL ARAB LEADER AND PROFESS TO SEE OUR CURRENT FOCUS ON SYRIANS AS INCONSISTENT WITH THAT OFTEN-STATED PURPOSE. THEY ARE POINTING TO THE OLD CANARD THAT ONE GETS MORE ATTENTION FROM USG FOR BEING DIFFICULT THAN FOR BEING COOPERATIVE.

4. WE ARE EMPHASIZING TO ALL SUCH INTERLOCUTORS THAT THEIR CONCERN IS TOTALLY UNFOUNDED. WE REMIND THEM THAT EGYPT HAS LONG BEEN REGARDED AS PRINCIPAL COUNTRY IN ARAB WORLD AND THAT USG SUPPORTS SADAT AND HIS POLICIES IN EVERY FEASIBLE WAY. SUBSTANTIAL US ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR EGYPT IS SIMPLY ONE EXAMPLE OF THAT SUPPORT. SO IS WARM RECEPTION SADAT RECEIVED WHEN APPEARING BEFORE CONGRESS AND ON ENTIRE US VISIT. WITHOUT SADAT'S COURAGE AND STATESMANSHIP, THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN NO PEACE PROCESS. SAME TIME WE DO BELIEVE SYRIAN ROLE IN LEBANON HAS GENERALLY BEEN CONSTRUCTIVE, BUT THIS VIEW IS IN NO WAY INTENDED TO BELITTLE SADAT'S AND EGYPT'S IMPORTANCE. ALL FRIENDS OF LEBANON CAN ONLY WELCOME ANY SETTLEMENT WHICH CAN BE REACHED THERE. OUR CURRENT DISCUSSIONS WITH SYRIANS, AS OUR EGYPTIAN FRIENDS SHOULD KNOW, FOCUS PRIMARILY ON HOW TO GET THE PEACE PROCESS UNDERWAY ONCE AGAIN. WHILE
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 CAIRO 01761 01 OF 02 101413Z

USG IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR AMERICAN MEDIA COVERAGE, IT IS SIMPLY UNTURE TO SUGGEST USG CONSIDERS ASAD AS THE PRINCIPAL ARAB LEADER.

SECRET

NNN

SECRET

PAGE 01 CAIRO 01761 02 OF 02 101530Z

42

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
----- 005965

R 101300Z FEB 76
FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0000D
INFO AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

S E C R E T FINAL SECTION OF 2 CAIRO 1761

EXDIS

5. COMMENT: THERE IS CLEARLY A LIMIT TO HOW MUCH USG CAN OR SHOULD TAKE INTO ACCOUNT INFLATED EGYPTIAN SENSITIVITIES. FACT REMAINS, HOWEVER, THAT EGYPTIANS ARE HYPERSENSITIVE, AND WE SHOULD AT LEAST TRY TO UNDERSTAND. ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE IS NOT ADEQUATE BALM FOR THIS PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEM; EGYPTIANS THROUGHOUT GOE YEARS FOR POLITICAL REASSURANCE.

6. FURTHER, WE SHOULD NOT UNDERESTIMATE EGYPTIAN SENSITIVITY ON SPECIFIC ISSUE OF OUR SEEMING TO BELIEVE ASAD HAS, FOR TIME BEING, MORE INFLUENCE IN ARAB WORLD THAN DOES SADAT. EGYPTIANS ARE PATHOLOGICAL ON THIS POINT, AND REGRETTABLY, READ THINGS INTO ACTS OF COMMISSION AND OMISSION THAT ARE NOT INTENDED. SHOULD WE APPEAR TO BE PAYING A POLITICAL PREMIUM TO SYRIANS FOR BAD BEHAVIOR, THIS WILL STRENGTHEN THOSE EGYPTIAN ELEMENTS WHO HAVE QUESTIONED SADAT'S POLICY OF LARGELY ACCOMMODATING HIMSELF TO OUR DESIRES. MORE SIGNIFICANTLY, SHOULD SADAT HIMSELF COME TO BELIEVE THAT WE HAVE CONCLUDED ASAD RATHER THAN HE IS PRINCIPAL ARAB LEADER FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE PROCESS, THE PRESIDENT'S SENSE OF HUMILIATION AND BITTERNESS WILL BE STRONG. HE MIGHT NOT EVEN MENTION IT TO HIS SUBORDINATES, BUT WE WILL FEEL IT IN VARIOUS WAYS. AS OF NOW, THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT THIS HAS YET HAPPENED, BUT WE SHOULD NOT TAKE SADAT'S CONTINUED ACCOMMODATION TO OUR DESIRES FOR GRANTED. SHOULD HE COME TO FEEL, RIGHTLY OR WRONGLY, THAT WE ARE PUSHING ANOTHER ARAB LEADER, HIS INSTINCTS,
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 CAIRO 01761 02 OF 02 101530Z

BOTH AS A EGYPTIAN AND AS LEADER OF HIS NATION, COULD PROMPT HIM TO TAKE ACTION TO REDRESS SUCH A SITUATION. THESE MIGHT NOT NECESSARILY BE HELPFUL TO OUR PURPOSES.

7. IT IS IN OUR INTEREST TO NIP THESE EGYPTIAN MISGIVINGS IN THE BUD. HAND HOLDING IS IMPORTANT AT THIS JUNCTURE, WHEN

SADAT AND FAHMY IN PARTICULAR ARE DEEPLY WORRIED THAT PEACE
PROCESS IS IN INITIAL STAGE OF STAGNATION. IN THESE
CIRCUMSTANCES IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE CONTINUE TO KEEP SADAT
AND FAHMY INFORMED OF OUR THINKING ON POSSIBLE ACTIONS IN ME
AREA AND TO DO SO ON TIMELY BASIS. WE MUST SOMEHOW
REDRESS SITUATION WHERE ISRAELIS APPEAR TO BE DOING ALL OF THE
TALKING ABOUT WHAT THEY ALLEGE ARE OUR JOINT INTENTIONS. IT
MIGHT ALSO BE USEFUL FOR DEPT. TO LOOK FOR OPPORTUNITIES
IN NEAR FUTURE TO STRESS PUBLICLY USG APPRECIATION FOR IMPORTANCE
OF EGYPT AND FOR SADAT'S CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE IN ME
PEACE PROCESS. ANY SUCH PUBLIC DELCARATION WOULD BE EAGERLY
SEIZED ON HERE AS REAFFIRMATION USG PRIZES ITS SPECIAL
RELATIONSHIP WITH CAIRO AND INTENDS TO MAINTAIN IT, WHATEVER
SYRIAN CLAIMS ON US MAY ARISE DUE TO DIPLOMATIC EXIGENCIES.
EGYPTIANS CANNOT HEAR THEIR PRAISES SUNG ENOUGH.
EILTS

SECRET

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, FOREIGN RELATIONS, PUBLICITY CAMPAIGNS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 10 FEB 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: saccheem
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976CAIRO01761
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760050-0684
From: CAIRO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760265/aaaacfai.tel
Line Count: 239
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: saccheem
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 20 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <20 APR 2004 by GarlanWA>; APPROVED <27 SEP 2004 by saccheem>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: GOE CONCERN ABOUT AMERICAN OFFICIAL AND PRESS PROMINENCE BEING GIVEN TO ASAD AND SYRIA
TAGS: PFOR, EG, US, SY, XF, (ASAD, HAFIZ), (SADAT, ANWAR)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006